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# Security Council

Seventy-first year

*Provisional*

**7735**th meeting

Monday, 11 July 2016, 10 a.m.

New York

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| *President*: | Mr. Bessho | (Japan) |
| *Members*: | Angola | Mr. Gaspar Martins |
| | China | Mr. Zhang Dianbin |
| | Egypt | Mr. Kandeel |
| | France | Mr. Delattre |
| | Malaysia | Mr. Ibrahim |
| | New Zealand | Mr. Taula |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Safronkov |
| | Senegal | Mr. Seck |
| | Spain | Mr. Gasso Matoses |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Vitrenko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Meek |
| | United States of America | Mr. Klein |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Bermúdez |
| | Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) | Mr. Suárez Moreno |

## Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/566)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**Peace consolidation in West Africa**

**Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (S/2016/566)**

**The President**: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/566, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel.

I now give the floor to Mr. Chambas.

**Mr. Chambas**: I am pleased to be here today to brief the Security Council on the situation in West Africa and the Sahel. Further to the first report (S/2016/566) of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), which is before Council members, I would like to highlight a few issues and update them on some of the most recent developments.

Please allow me once again, on behalf of my colleagues, to thank Security Council members for their visit to Dakar and UNOWAS on 8 March and for their continuous attention to West Africa and the Sahel.

A momentous decision anxiously awaited by many was reached on 30 May. For the first time, a former President was sentenced by an African court for crimes committed during his reign. The sentence handed down to the former President of Chad, Mr. Hissène Habré, sent a strong signal against impunity, and I would like to commend Senegal for offering to host and to support this trial, which drew on the expertise of legal luminaries from throughout Africa.

On another positive note, the credible and peaceful elections held in the Niger, Benin and Cabo Verde equally provided opportunities for their respective citizens to express their preferences in a democratic manner. In Benin and Cabo Verde, the unsuccessful incumbents from ruling parties swiftly congratulated the winners from opposition parties, allowing for peace and smooth transitions in both countries.

Regarding the nexus between peace, governance and development, it was indeed the desperation arising from the perceived lack of opportunities, justice and hope that contributed to the creation of a climate conducive to the emergence of militant movements that have since manifested themselves in the north of Mali and north-eastern Nigeria, and which threaten to destabilize West Africa and the Sahel region and the Lake Chad Basin area. Instability and the existence of terrorist networks in the Middle East and the Maghreb have further fuelled the extremism and terrorist activities in all these areas south of the Sahara.

Across the Sahel as we speak, 4.5 million people are displaced and 6 million are in need of emergency food assistance. Millions cannot farm their lands, and millions of children do not receive the education they need for a better future. Boko Haram continues to change tactics and has twice overrun the city of Bosso, in the Niger, on 3 and 16 June, killing dozens of soldiers. As a result, its residents, as well as internally displaced persons and refugees who had earlier escaped violence in Nigeria due to continuing attacks by the group, have also fled and abandoned the town. I visited the area on 22 June, together with Nigerien authorities and international partners from the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration, as an expression of our solidarity with the people and authorities of Diffa province in the Niger.

Terrorists have also struck further afield in West Africa, notably in Ouagadougou on 15 January and in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, on 13 March. Traffickers, criminals and their collaborators are seeking to benefit from lawlessness and insecurity to expand their networks. We must not allow this to continue or to spread.

First, we need to further strengthen regional forces mobilized under the Multinational Joint Task Force. I wholeheartedly salute the commendable efforts already undertaken by the countries of the region and international partners, but capacities, particularly in the area of intelligence gathering, need to be stepped up. Secondly, we need to strengthen efforts to meet

the basic needs of innocent civilians trapped in this tragedy. It is deeply troubling that only 11 per cent of the United Nations appeal for $1.98 billion in 2016 has been received so far. Thirdly and crucially, we need to strengthen democratic governance and address root causes as essential tasks in conflict-prevention efforts.

In the second half of this year, there will be legislative elections in Cote d'Ivoire, presidential elections in the Gambia, and legislative and presidential elections in Ghana. In Guinea and Togo, citizens are still waiting long-overdue local elections. In Ghana, we are working assiduously with all stakeholders to help them overcome their differences in order to maintain the country's well-deserved reputation for peaceful and well-managed polls. In the Gambia, I am deeply concerned about the repression following peaceful protests in April calling for electoral reforms, and the ensuing allegations of torture and the death of detainees, as well as inflammatory statements targeting certain communities. We conducted a high-level joint mission to the country, together with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and will continue our engagement in support of the people of the Gambia throughout the electoral process.

At the same time, countries of the region are engaged in reviews of their foundational laws. Commissions put in place in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone are working on recommendations to adapt their Constitutions to their needs as modern nations. The referendum in Senegal, notably, has endorsed a reduction of the presidential term from seven to five years. After only six weeks, the Commission in Benin has submitted pertinent recommendations for political and constitutional reforms. We are working with our partners to support these processes, and are making the United Nations collective expertise available to help strengthen Burkina Faso's High Council for Reconciliation and National Unity, among other efforts to assist the country in consolidating the very successful transition. In Mauritania and Togo, we are pursuing efforts, with regional partners, to support dialogue among stakeholders over critical national issues.

We have good hope that these West African and Sahel countries will emerge from these reform efforts more cohesive, better governed and with more women taking part in decision-making. This would in turn strengthen their resilience to withstand internal and external shocks, such as the recent Ebola outbreak, which has been eradicated. In spite of impressive strides in the fight against corruption, the fall of oil prices has undermined the efforts of Nigeria's new Government to revamp the economy. At the same time, the country is experiencing community tensions, disputes over resources and renewed militant movements, not only in the north-east but also in the Biafra area and the Niger Delta. As the recent decision of the Central Bank to unpeg the national currency from the United States dollar will predictably lead to price increases and socioeconomic hardship, Nigerian actors need to deepen consultative and economic reforms as they endeavour to reboot Africa's largest economy. The examples of Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and other places amply demonstrate the strength of policy-making to develop more balanced and resilient economies.

At the same time, as the desert is expanding and water resources are diminishing, we also need to come together as international partners. We must not allow fragility to turn into failure. In this vein, I urge the Council to support — as it has always done — the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel as our part of efforts to address the root causes of the crisis. As Council members know, the subregion is also increasingly threatened by violent extremism and radicalization, often linked to wider regional and global instability. In response to the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, UNOWAS organized a regional conference on 27 and 28 June in Dakar, with key United Nations and other partners, to collectively identify drivers of extremism and avenues to strengthen prevention in West Africa and the Sahel. The conference emphasized the need for greater dialogue with women and youth, as well as the need for integrated security, development and human rights approaches, local ownership and alternative narratives to that presented by violent extremism. I will continue to engage with national and regional actors on this subject. I am also setting up a United Nations regional task force on the prevention of violent extremism in the region to facilitate the coordination and complementarity of the United Nations work in this area.

The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission, which I chair, continued the emplacement of pillars for the definitive demarcation of the border and held consultations in the capital cities of Yaoundé and Abuja during the reporting period. The Commission

remains a prime example of the benefits of foresight and cooperation, and continues to make very good progress, particularly based on the excellent bilateral relations that now exist between the two countries, Cameroon and Nigeria.

Looking at the underlying challenges in the subregion and beyond, we also need to think harder about how we can collectively improve international conflict prevention efforts before crises escalate beyond control. We owe it to the people of West Africa and the Sahel, who have shown such remarkable resilience to persisting multifaceted challenges. With its expanded mandate following the merger, UNOWAS remains fully committed to playing its role in the region, in cooperation with partners, including the Group of Five for the Sahel, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Chambas for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.*